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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [AS](#)  
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA MULLING HOW TO INCREASE AID IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: Canberra 799

Classified by Pol/Econ Counselor Edgard Kagan for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

¶1. (C/NF) Following his late August/early September visit to Washington, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan told us the GOA is interested in increasing its aid contribution in Afghanistan. Overcoming logistical roadblocks to getting Australian aid workers to the field, however, will be the key to making this happen. End summary.

#### Washington Trip

¶2. (C/NF) During a September 10 meeting with Pol/Econcouns, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan praised his recent trip to Washington. McMullan highlighted his meetings with Deputy Secretary Lew, USAID Acting Administrator Fulgham and Assistant Secretary Campbell as particularly enlightening and said he came away with an increased level of awareness and concern for Australia's potential role in Afghanistan.

¶3. (C/NF) McMullan, who together with Acting AusAID Director General Peter Baxter (reftel) oversees Australia's international development agency, said that there is interest in increasing Australia's development assistance in Afghanistan. The problem, McMullan continued, is not financial, but rather logistical. AusAID lacks the means to deploy its workers to the field and would be interested in working with the United States to improve this capacity. Pol/Econcouns expressed thanks for Australia's contribution to the effort in Afghanistan and affirmed that we would be interested in working with Australia to expand its assistance efforts in Afghanistan.

#### Quadrennial Review

¶4. (C/NF) Following up on a conversation with Deputy Secretary Lew, McMullan said that Australia would be interested in observing or participating in the U.S. Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review before the end of the year in whatever capacity was deemed appropriate. He noted as an aside that AusAID is considering carrying out a review similar to the Quadrennial Review in Australia. Noting his discussions with the Deputy Secretary and Acting Administrator Fulgham, McMullan stressed Australia's desire to have a formal dialogue between AusAID and USAID, saying he would like to have Peter Baxter and his team meet with their U.S. counterparts by the end of the year.

#### Comment

¶5. (C/NF) This is another signal of strong Australian interest in expanding assistance to Afghanistan -- we believe they are open to our suggestions. While Foreign Minister Stephen Smith has

ministerial oversight of AusAID, we were left with the impression that McMullan and Baxter have been left to run the agency with a generous amount of latitude. McMullan has oversight responsibilities and takes a strong interest in big picture issues, but defers to Baxter on the day-to-day operations of AusAID.

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